

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

By MABEL
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HELEN IS FORCED TO SERVE FOR A COMPANY DINNER
AN IGNOMINIOUS POT ROAST

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Mabel Herbert Uner

"Who? The Chandlers! Hold the wire! With his hand over the phone, Warren roared out: 'The Chandlers are downstairs. What the deuce—' 'The Chandlers!' Helen flew in from the dining room. 'Oh—oh,' in stammering excitement, 'they can't be coming for dinner! I invited them for next Thursday—the 17th! Oh, they couldn't have such a—'

"You've got your dates mixed," with a snort. "What're you going to do about it? Quick!"

"There's not a thing for dinner!" frantically. "Oh, we—"

"Well, we can't keep them standing down there." Then into the phone, "Send them up."

"Oh, Warren, we can't have them!" with hysterical shrillness. "We've only a pot roast!"

"Say you made a mistake in the date! If they've got any sense they'll clear out."

"Oh, no—no, she'd be furious! It's a quarter of seven—we've a half hour! You receive them. Say we—oh, what excuse can we give? Say the oven exploded—the maid burned her arm—dinner'll be late."

"I'll say nothing of the sort! Now we'll not complicate things by lying."

"You must! She'll be insulted if—Oh, there they are now!"

As the door bell clattered, Helen dashed out to the kitchen. Jerking the bread knife from the astonished Dora, she wrapped the girl's apron about her hand.

"It's the Chandlers! Go to the door, but keep your hand in your apron. You've burned it—understand? Hurry!"

While the girl was ushering in the unexpected guests, Helen made a frantic survey of the ice box and pantry shelves. The Chandlers for dinner with only a pot roast!

"Open this—quick!" handing down a can of asparagus, as the bewildered Dora reappeared. "It only has to be heated."

For the next ten minutes the kitchen was the scene of desperate, nerve-tensioned haste. Dora, stimulated by a promised dollar, moved with unaccustomed speed. Behind the drawn folding doors she changed the cloth and reset the table with all the "company" frills.

Everything responded to the emergency exigencies—except the pot roast. That remained a pot roast—ignominiously cheap and plebeian. Helen's fertile brain had not yet concocted a lie that would excuse it.

The hors-d'oeuvre on the table, the cocktails mixed, the wine opened, and Dora plied with countless instructions, Helen rushed in to dress.

The pot roast! She was still struggling with the intractable pot roast as she fluttered into an evening gown. A quarter past seven, flushed, breathless, and effusively apologetic, she hurried in to greet her guests.

"I'm so sorry to have kept you waiting! I suppose Warren's told you about our accident—the oven exploded and the maid burned her wrist."

Warren had not told them. Having stolidly refused to "lie out of it," he had made not the slightest explanation for the half hour's wait, and now he glowered darkly at Helen's glib excuses.

What would they think when the pot roast appeared, anguished Helen, as they went into the dining room. The burned wrist could not explain that.

The Italian hors-d'oeuvre was a novelty and most appetizing, but the soup, having been diluted to make four portions, was suspiciously thin. As Dora removed the plates, Helen, with deepening color, awaited the august entrance of the pot roast.

At last it came, a meager dark mound with its accompanying gravy and browned potatoes. Helen saw Mrs. Chandler's astonished glance.

While Warren carved, she kept her eyes fixed miserably on her plate. Unlike the very last she had hoped her feminine agility for fabrications would come to her rescue. But for once her resourcefulness failed her. She could invent no plausible excuse for this pot roast.

It was a scant roast, too—barely a pound and a half—and Warren was cutting into it recklessly. To have pot roast—and not even enough! Could a guest dinner sink to greater ignominy?

"No, give that to Mr. Chandler," as Dora placed before her a thickly carved slice. Then to Warren: "Dear, just some of the potatoes for me. You're always forgetting about my diet."

"Eh, what's that?" He looked up, the knife suspended, but Helen's swift, flaming glance was telegraphic.

"The doctor's put me on a strict diet," in nervous explanation. "I'm not even allowed all vegetables," thinking of the small can of asparagus.

Hoping that enough wine would dull their critical appraisal of the dinner, Helen had instructed Dora to keep the glasses filled.

Mr. Chandler was already in a mellowed mood, but as Mrs. Chandler drank most sparingly her critical faculties were unimpaired.

"Won't you have some of the quince jelly?" urged Helen, for she had tried to pad out the dinner with condiments. "Dear, did you pass Mrs. Chandler the olives?"

"No, thank you, I don't care for any," stily. "No—no more wine," to Dora, who started to refill her glass.

It was an infinite relief when the mortifying pot roast, not pathetically depleted, was finally removed and the salad brought on. At least Warren's salad dressing was always a success.

"Only a couple of leaves for me, dear. You know I can't have it," cautioned Helen, for there had been only one head of romaine.

"No salad?" asked Mr. Chandler. "Why, I thought salad was the main stay of a vegetarian diet."

"Oh, yes—it is," floundering, "but the vinegar—I'm not supposed to have anything acid."

Although the plum pudding was unmistakably canned, there was enough of it. And the sauce, made from the brandied peaches, was delicious.

With the coffee and cordials, served in the library before the glowing gas logs, Helen got out a box of French glacee mint leaves. But no amount of ultra frills could banish the memory of the pot roast!

Warren and Mr. Chandler were discussing the investment values of Bronx real estate. Mrs. Chandler, having several lots in her own name, seemed interested, and Helen was spared the exertion of entertaining her.

At half past ten their car was announced. As Mrs. Chandler put on her wraps in Warren's room, Helen knew that she saw his shabby slippers under the bed and his old toweling bathrobe caught in the closet door.

There had been no time for the rigid straightening-up and putting-out-of-sight process to which Warren's room was always subjected before the arrival of guests.

Still lashing her mind for some final palliating excuse for the unguest-like dinner, Helen could only murmur a blundering: "The next time you come—I hope we'll not be so upset. But Dora had quite a scare with that oven—and she's so easily flustered."

"Oh, I'm sure everything was very nice," protested Mrs. Chandler formally, searching in her muff for her gloves.

Seeing people off was always awkward. Helen never knew quite what to say at the last moment. Tonight it was doubly embarrassing. She could have screamed with relief when the door closed after them.

"Oh—oh, it was awful!" dropping down before the gas logs. "Oh, that pot roast! That hideous pot roast!"

"Yes, that wasn't exactly a swell dish!" grunted Warren. "It stumped her all right. Notice the way she lapped it?"

"Oh, she'll tell everybody," wallingly. "She'll say we invited them to dinner and gave them pot roast."

"Hope she does! Why the Sam Hill don't you write down your dates?"

"I did!" running for the calendar pad. "Look, turning to Thursday the 17th, 'The Chandlers for dinner.' Oh, I'm sure it was the 17th!"

"You are, eh? Well, whenever there's a mistake—I'll bank on it being yours. Jove, if you ever get a thing right—it's a miracle."

Helen was too crushed to argue. Her assurance about the date was shaken. She had written the invitation, and had kept no copy of the note.

Still brooding over the humiliating evening, she went into her room to undress. She was almost ready for bed when the telephone rang. Through the open door came Warren's deep "Hello! Who? . . . Oh, Mrs. Chandler! . . . How's that? . . . Oh, that's all right!" with a hearty laugh. "We thought it was our mistake. . . . Not at all—it was a pleasure. . . . No—no, don't bother to write—the joke's on all of us. . . . Yes, I'll tell her."

Her face shining with cold cream, and her hair tumbling over her night-gowned shoulders, Helen came flying in. But with maddening leisure Warren lit a cigar before he would answer her tempestuous queries.

"Looked up your note and found she marked the wrong date! Guess that pot roast set her thinking."

"Oh—oh!" triumphantly. "Then it wasn't my mistake! I did have the right—"

"Well, what of it? If you were so blamed sure you were right—why didn't you come square out and say so? They'd have a darned sight more respect for you if you hadn't pulled off that string of weak-kneed lies. I'll bet they're sizing you up just about now."

Stung.

"The authorities ought to get these swindlers. I sent a dollar in answer to an ad, 'How to make butter from grass.'"

"What did they say?"

"After you get the grass ready give it to a cow and then churn the milk."

Thumb Index to Character.

Just as the chin gives qualities to the face, so the thumb marks the personality of the hand, and is an unerring index of a man's natural strength or weakness of character.

Horse Was a Little Slow.

Seagirt would not lie, I know, but he is dreadfully careless with the truth. He said that the horse he hired to go to Glenellen last summer was so slow that a spider wove its web in the wheel. Children came and made mud pies in the shade of the buggy. At one point he had an exciting race with a caterpillar. A woman came out and asked him to please drive a little faster, he was keeping the sun off her tomatoes. He said the horse was slower than a barber he knows, who is so slow that the whiskers grow faster than he can shave, and by the time he is through the customer has a full beard.—Exchange.

To Clearly Convey News.

"One Who Splits an Infinite Every Time and Glories in the Job" writes: "What do you superstitious make of this, which I take from a report of a company meeting held recently: 'The directors decided to more than double the carry-forward? Can the retaining be conveyed as precisely by preserving the integrity of the verb?'"—London Chronicle.

Plenty of Canadian Fish.

The Canadian government's venture to supply the public with fish at a reasonable price has proved a success. A refrigerator service from Nova Scotia to Ontario was provided, and the government's scheme was advertised. In one week there were three cars, carrying approximately 60,000 pounds of fish, as against normal shipments of 5,000 pounds.

Plain Evidence.

"The man yonder every one is looking at is a big gun."

"He looks it with that bullet head on him."

added to the midsummer Christmas holidays. This gave about eight weeks' vacation, during which the larger boys assisted in sheep shearing, fruit-picking, hop gathering and other outdoor work. Last Christmas a number of schoolboys did this and some of them earned from \$50 upward.

Some measure of the kind was necessary, owing to the steady depletion of labor by conscription. Men fit only for home military service were organized for war work though women were not. But if the war long con-

tinues female labor is likely to be similarly utilized.

One Englishman Does "Her Bit" by Keeping Open House for Wounded Men's Visitors.

There is a large class of Englishwomen, writes a London correspondent, who have to keep their own homes going, but who manage to take time to help to ease the war strain. She visits soldiers' wives and families in dark and dirty streets, as do most of her friends and hundreds of other women. She never goes empty-handed. To pay for these luxuries she dispenses with help in the housework, rising earlier in the morning to do it herself. Here is the experience of one:

In the course of her visit to a hospital a tall, sad, young Scotchman won her sympathy. He was grievously wounded, but what he seemed to suffer from most was homesickness and a wild longing for his own people, especially his mother. "She can't afford it," he said when asked why she did not visit him. "She could get a half-fare warrant, I know, but even then she's not accustomed to travel, and she'd be lost in a strange town."

This gave her an idea. She would ask the mother to come to Leeds and stay with her! She met her at the station and took her up to the hospital, where the excited boy lay.

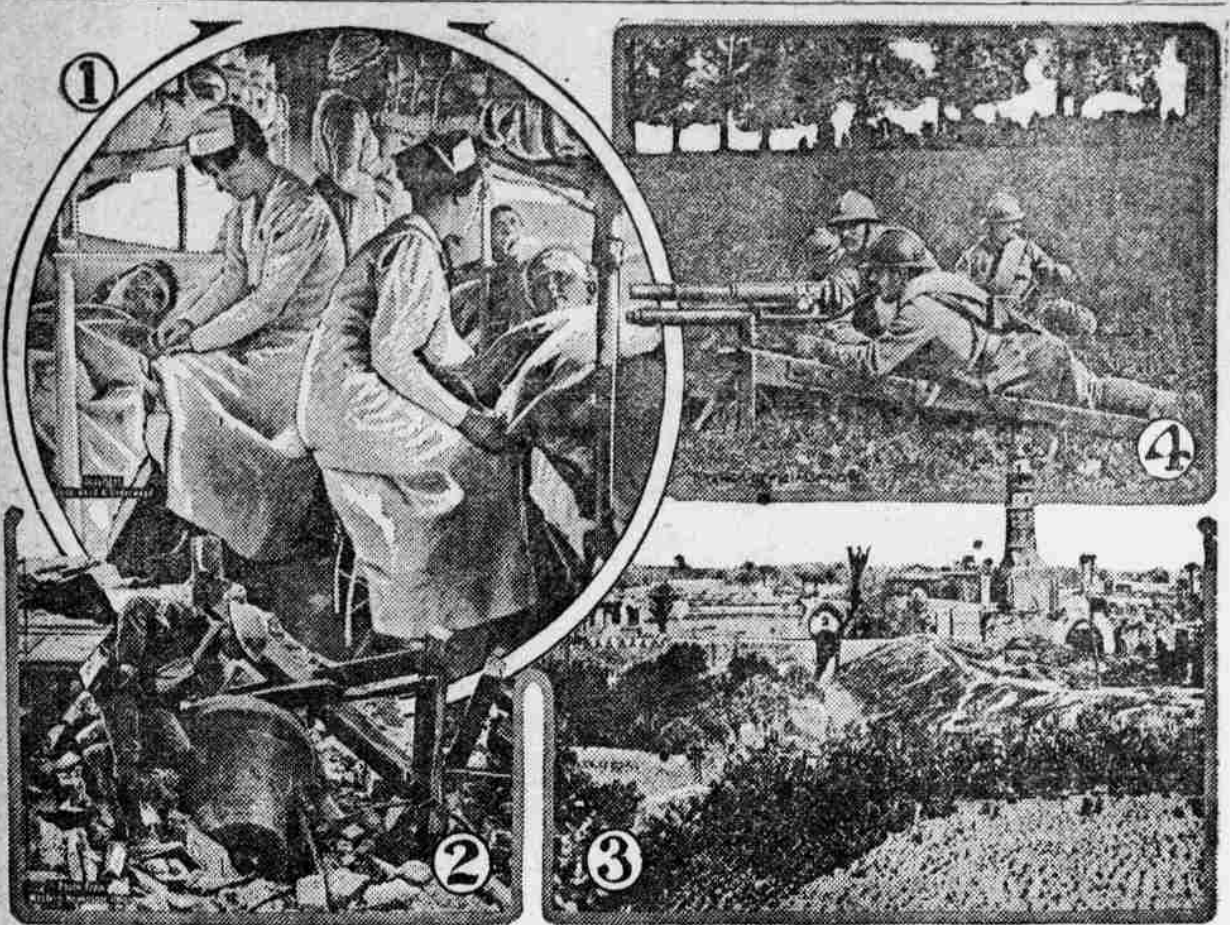
For a few days the old Scotch woman stayed with her, and then returned to Scotland full of gratitude and delight at having seen her son. She was the first of many guests entertained by this warm-hearted Englishwoman. Soldiers' wives came, sometimes bringing with them a baby—once or twice it was a baby the father had never seen before, born while he was at the front; soldiers' sisters, sweethearts, mothers, all poor women who could not afford to have come without her offer of hospitality. They arrived tired, anxious and sad, and she comforted them and cheered them, and they went away happier to know that their dear ones had so kind a friend at hand.

War Work to Come First.

New Zealand Efficiency Board Reaches Out for Every Man in the Country—Woman's Turn Coming.

The national efficiency board, created by the New Zealand government, has decided that every man and woman in the dominion must engage in war work if necessity arises. It also sent a circular to school boards suggesting that the midwinter holiday in July be curtailed, and the time saved then be

used for war work.



1—Scene in a new hospital car designed and built by one of the railroads and offered to the United States government. 2—French soldier examining a church bell in the ruins of a village near Lens overlooked by the looting Germans. 3—View of Gaza, recently captured by the British forces in Palestine. 4—Practicing with the new French 37-millimeter field gun.

EVEN THE FIREMEN ARE KNITTING FOR THE SOLDIERS



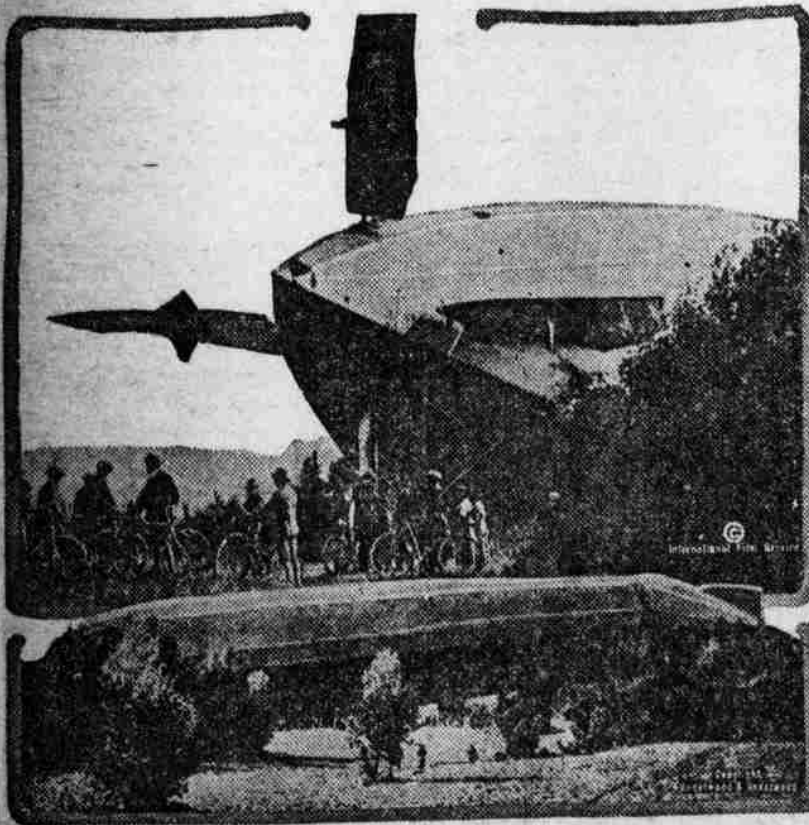
Knitting for the soldiers is no longer confined to the women. The firemen of Rome, N. Y., have found quite a deal of time to spare while waiting in their firehouse for blazes to start. So all day and all night those on duty are at their knitting turning out socks for the American fund for French wounded, which installed three knitting machines in engine house No. 2.

VENICE MAY FALL INTO HANDS OF THE TEUTONS



Panorama of Venice, which may be taken by the Teuton armies that have invaded Italy. The removable art treasures of the city already have been taken away.

ZEPPELIN CAPTURED BY THE FRENCH



Two views of the great new type Zeppelin which was brought down practically uninjured by French aviators when it was returning from a raid over London. It came to ground near Bourboigne-les-Bains.

U. S. PORTABLE SEARCHLIGHT



This is a portable searchlight that is in use at the United States marine camp at Quantico, Va. It can be moved anywhere at short notice.

Good Cause for It.

Stranger—Say, it seems like the whole town's running. What's the excitement?

Native—Excitement! Why, mister, the 9:45 train's coming past.